

I am here, Sam

Artesian Boyd is a junior at Meridian High School. Her parents are Steve and Cynthia Boyd and she has three siblings, Crystal, Steve and Sam. Artesian's story is about Sam, a sergeant in the U.S. Army. When she wrote it in December, Sam was still in Iraq; he returned home in January.

"I chose my subject because I think about my brother all the time," she said. "The troops must be supported, not because we should be at war, but because we are at war."

Sam is 25 years old. He served in a quartermaster unit, working on machinery and driving supplies to the troops in forward units.

The Boyds own and operate a family business, S&C Tree Service of Meridian. Everyone gathered at mom and dad's house for Sam's homecoming — Cynthia even left the Christmas tree up so he could see it.

By Artesian Boyd

special to The Star

How hard would it be for someone to adapt to a strange new culture? Even more, I wonder how hard would it be if you were not welcome or wanted where you were sent to go?

These are the circumstances that our country's Guardsmen face every day.

Often, questions circulate about whether or not the country should be at war. I am afraid the question is irrelevant. We are at war, plain and simple.

You should support the troops, regardless of whether you support the war or not. Our fellow countrymen and women have left their homes and lives

to protect us and help another country. Perhaps, the reason people don't completely support Guardsmen is because they do not understand life overseas.

My brother, Samuel T. Cole, is currently stationed in Iraq. I can still remember, six years ago, before the war was even on my mind, how hurt I was that my big brother was leaving me.

I couldn't understand. What had I done? Tears filled my eyes as we pulled up to the recruiter's office, and I couldn't understand my brother's words of comfort. All I heard was, "I'm leaving."

As time passed, my brother was shipped from Kuwait and Baghdad, back and forth. He is married with two kids. When my 3-year-old niece tells me she misses her daddy, I ask, "Do you know where he is?" She replies, "He is in Raq-town."

I asked my brother, "What do you miss? How do you stay sane? How bad is it? The answers surprisingly were simple.

I asked Sam ...

The first question I asked Sam was, "What is the hardest part about being in Iraq?"

He said the hardest part was being away from family and missing out on everything they are doing and going through. Sam told me he felt powerless to help in family matters because he was so far away. Also, adjusting to the Iraqi way of life was difficult. It is hot, sandy and the weekends start on Thursdays.

Another thing I wondered about is if it really is as bad over there as it seems to be. Sam said it had gotten better; things

are not as bad as they were at one point. The times of dead bodies lying around has passed.

"Right now, they are just trying to make sure everything is OK over there and that they will be able to handle their own country," Sam said.

Still, I wondered what keeps a soldier from going insane. Troops are being shipped away to a place where welcome mats were nowhere to be found.

Support U.S. troops

Sam explained to me that soldiers have an obligation. Not only does he have an obligation to the military, but also to his family and country.

The soldiers would go to any means to keep their families free. Only a strong man or woman can put aside his concerns and worry about another person — or, in this case, another country.

Do not think that just knowing one person is writing to him is enough to keep him going.

The troops must be supported, not because we should be at war, but because we are at war. My brother, and many other soldiers, do not sit around and complain about being at war. They protect our country from invasion.

True, the soldiers may count their days until departure. But, who would not count the days until they can see their families again?

When a country is at war, there should not be arguments over the justification of war. The country should unite. Guns and powder will not end the war in Iraq — prayer, unity and determination are the only solution.



PHOTO BY PAULA MERRITT / THE MERIDIAN STAR

WELCOME HOME

Artesian Boyd, clockwise from left, Steve Boyd, Steve Boyd Jr., Cynthia Boyd and Adorein Cole hug Samuel Boyd after he returned home in January from active duty in Iraq.

Doing business without the boss

In the absence of Steve Cathey, owner of Total Fitness Training Plus, Cindy Henderson, a certified trainer, has assumed manager duties. And while it can be a bit overwhelming at times, Henderson said the staff remains on course through frequent communication with Steve.

Steve is a Navy Reserve medic assigned assigned to a Marine Unit. He is expected to return home in early March.

Here is Cindy's New Year's letter to her boss.

Dear Steve,

Happy New Year! I hope this letter finds you well. All of the staff and the clients send you their best wishes and hope for your safe return.

It has been an eventful year here at home since you've been gone to Iraq, one that will likely remain in our memories for many years to come. We elected a president, cleaned up after hurricanes and continued to fight a war.

Our family at Total Fitness grew this last year, but along with that is the sadness that comes when one of us has to leave. Kelly and her husband will be leaving in February for a new destination, and she will take with her a new baby. And Brian is leaving in January to live in Japan with his family. I am sure you join Rich, Richard and me in wishing them good luck and happiness — and we look forward to the time we will see them again.

Our clients are the best! They have worried and prayed for you and ask about news from you daily. What would we do without

the Internet? I have shared most of the pictures you have sent and when the reports out of Iraq are not good, it is a relief to have that line of communication with you.

Of course, that works both ways. I was able to keep you informed when our friend and client, Bent, was so sick. Thankfully, Bent has recovered and is doing very well.

I know you have had time to think and plan for the future of the studio. I will be very happy to hand it back to you, hopefully none the worse for wear! I also look forward to working with you and watching it grow when you return.

Take care, just a few more months now and we will see you when you get back!

Your friend first and always!

Cindy



Cathey